



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

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P.O. Box 160046
Orlando, FL 32816-0046

UCF Alumni Book Club
Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement
by John Lewis with Michael D'Orso
Book Discussion Guide

Book Description

In 1957, a teenaged boy named John Lewis left a cotton farm in Alabama for Nashville, the epicenter of the struggle for civil rights in America. Lewis's adherence to nonviolence guided that critical time and established him as one of the movement's most charismatic and courageous leaders. Lewis's leadership in the Nashville Movement—a student-led effort to desegregate the city of Nashville using sit-in techniques based on the teachings of Gandhi—set the tone for major civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. Lewis traces his role in the pivotal Selma marches, Bloody Sunday, and the Freedom Rides. Inspired by his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lewis's vision and perseverance altered history. In 1986, he ran and won a congressional seat in Georgia, and remains in office to this day, continuing to enact change.

The late Edward M. Kennedy said of Lewis, "John tells it like it was...Lewis spent most of his life walking *against* the wind of the times, but he was surely walking *with* the wind of history."

About the Authors

John Lewis was the US Representative for Georgia's fifth district, a position he has held since 1987. He passed away in 2020.

Michael D'Orso is the author of sixteen books, which include *Oceana*, *Plundering Paradise*, and *The Cost of Courage*. His work has been featured or reviewed in *The New Yorker*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated*, and other publications.

General Questions:

- What were your initial thoughts of the book?
- Share a favorite quote from the book. Why did this quote stand out?
- What new things did you learn?
- What questions do you still have?
- Are there any people in the book whose perspective you wanted?
- Which scene has stuck with you the most?
- What did you think of the author's voice and writing style?
- What topics does the book make you want to explore further?

Book-Specific Questions

- How is John Lewis's memoir relevant today?
- How much did you know, or understand, about the history of Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement before reading *Walking with the Wind*? Did John Lewis's memoir expand your knowledge or confirm your ideas of that era in history?
- The media is mentioned a lot throughout the novel, reporters and camera crews that were on location. What does this tell us about the media and their relationship to social and political change at that time?
- In what way do Lewis' religious background and values influence his approach to the struggle for civil rights as well as the movement as a whole?
- Paragraph for discussion: "I don't think there's any way to estimate how much that experience of tending those nesting hens taught me about discipline and responsibility and, of course, patience. It was not a struggle, not at all. It was something I wanted to do. The kinship I felt with these other living creatures, the closeness, the compassion, is a feeling I carried with me out into the world from that point on. It might have been a feeling I was born with, I don't know, but the first time I recall being aware of it was with those chickens." Pg. 26

Resources

Discussion Questions

<https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/non-fiction/11797-walking-with-the-wind-lewis?start=3>

Author Website

<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Walking-with-the-Wind/John-Lewis/9781476797717>